

VAAFM Best Management Practices (BMP) Program Cost-Share Policy Document

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets recognizes that water quality projects are being implemented on many farms throughout the State to address agricultural pollution reduction goals. The State of Vermont has recognized the need for agricultural best management practices and has stated that public assistance in the form of cost-sharing shall be made available to farmers pursuant with 6 V.S.A. chapter 215. By statute the Agency cannot exceed 90% cost-share on any agricultural water quality BMP and shall make maximum use of federal financial aid for the same purpose. Beyond the statutory requirement there is a need for additional policy guidance to consistently and equitably provide cost-share on eligible projects. State financial assistance agreements shall observe these policies per farm facility or facilities operating under a single nutrient management plan (NMP).

BMP Program Grant Cost-Share Rates

The original version of this policy incentivized grants in priority areas with higher cost-share rates. It was realized that an application ranking procedure is more effective in prioritizing projects pursuant with 6 V.S.A. § 4823 and therefore this policy is revised to reflect equitable cost-share rates statewide.

1. Combined state and federal cost-share rates for production area practices aiming to address water quality pollution goals shall not exceed 90% on BMP practices.
2. Combined state and federal cost-share rates for livestock exclusion practices aiming to address water quality pollution goals shall not exceed 90% statewide for fencing, stream crossings, watering facilities, and other directly associated practices with livestock exclusion. This rate does not apply to pasture fencing which is not adjacent to or otherwise excluding livestock access to surface water.
3. Combined state and federal cost-share rates for other non-production area practices, including remote waste storage facilities, aiming to address water quality pollution goals shall not exceed 90% and the maximum cost-share rate shall only apply when the site is the best available site on the farm for the purposes of protecting ground water and surface water quality.

State-Only BMP Grant Funding Limits

Where a farm is engaged in an Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets BMP grant and is not associated with a federal cost-share agreement for the same practices, the following funding limitations apply:

1. State-only cost-share funding shall not exceed \$100,000 per calendar year (January to December).

2. State-only cost-share funding cannot collectively exceed \$200,000 within three calendar years (January to December). This limitation does not apply to BMP grants that are associated with federal agreements.

BMP Grant Associated with Federal Agreement (EQIP-Assist) Funding Limits

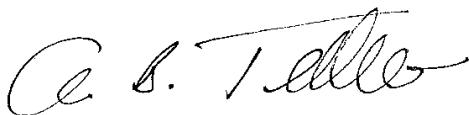
Where a farm is engaged in an Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets BMP grant associated with a federal cost-share agreement for the same practices, the following funding limitations apply:

1. State cost-share funding associated with a federal agreement shall not exceed a total of \$200,000 on practices included in the federal agreement.
2. State cost-share funding associated with a federal agreement shall not exceed the sum of the federal contribution on state BMP eligible practices.
3. State cost-share funding associated with federal agreements and state-only BMP grants cannot collectively exceed \$400,000 within five calendar years (January to December).

Secretary Funding Limit Considerations

The Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets may, on a case-by-case basis, exceed the funding limits of this policy provided there is sufficient written justification. Whenever the policy is exceeded, the statutory intent shall not be diminished, including ensuring the federal financial assistance is maximized and that the practices installed are necessary to address water quality pollution goals. Exceeding the policy must be reserved for emergency, unforeseen or extenuating situations, and in no case shall the policy be exceeded for a standard project.

The Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets hereby agrees to fulfill this policy for the BMP Program.



Anson Tebbetts, Secretary
Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

2/12/2018

Date

Effective upon date of signature.

Revised: December 1, 2017

Original policy enacted: October 20, 2016